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unprofessional in the minister to resort to sensational and unfair methods in advertising his preaching or his church. In nearly every city there is some one minister who has a large congregation and a popular hearing. So long as he is fair and brotherly all others rejoice in his popularity and prosperity. There is far less professional jealousy than one might suppose.

In practically all of the Protestant bodies, church life and government is becoming ever more democratic. Each congregation as a rule expresses its own preference and calls its own minister. This gives opportunity for intrigue, for clerical narrowness, for professional jealousy to assert themselves. To illustrate: A church is about to call a minister and has some names before it. As a rule the various aspirants for the place are perfectly fair; no one seeks to discredit others in order to enhance his own chances. It sometimes happens, however, that people of one school of doctrine raise questions and spread reports concerning the candidate's soundness in the faith. I have known a number of excellent men who have been undermined in this way. But it is only narrow bigots who resort to such practices; no reputable minister would countenance them.

One other thing: When a minister is

changing pastorates there are certain ethical standards to be observed. Ministers are very restless and many are looking around for a "better" or a "larger" field. It is not regarded as ethical for a minister to coquet with some other call or to seek a call to some other church in order that he may be asked to remain in his present field at a larger salary. It is hardly ethical for a clergyman to accept a call to some other field till he has first conferred with officers of his present church. Of course every real man wants to do the largest work possible; and every minister desires an adequate income for his family. But the question of salary is seldom the first consideration. It is unethical to be looking out primarily for a larger salary. The minister who is believed to be doing this is soon discounted by his fellow ministers and is fatally discredited among the churches.

Jesus of Nazareth, it has been finely said, was the world's perfect gentleman. They who are called to be His followers and ministers of His grace, are expected to be like their Master. Many fail; humility compels us all to confess that we fall below our ideal. But my experience and observation teach me that ministers as a class maintain high ideals and live up to a fine code of professional ethics.

Ethics in the Public Service

Proposals for a Public Service Code

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AS our already extensive public service continues to grow and to absorb a larger and larger proportion of the workers of the country, we shall become increasingly concerned, not

only with the conditions under which public servants are employed, but also with the ethics and ideals that govern their conduct. A public service, the members of which are not guided by

considerations of public welfare, is bound to fall short of fulfilling its mission as an instrument of social usefulness.

In many professional groups it has long been the practice to formulate in a code the rules of conduct that individual members are expected to observe in their relations with each other, with their clients, and with the public. These rules do not always have the formal sanction of the group, but may simply be understood and accepted as a matter of professional custom. The clergy, for example, have certain unwritten rules that every clergyman is expected to obey. A number of professional groups, however, notably the physicians, the lawyers, the architects and the engineers, have reduced these rules to formal codes.

So far as the writer is informed, public servants, as such, have never developed a written code of ethics. There are in the public service representatives from all the professions having codes of this character, and these workers are quite as much subject to their canons of professional ethics while in government employ as they would be in private life; but there is no written code applying generally to all public servants.

Most persons would probably agree at once that a code of ethics for our public service would be highly desirable. It is pertinent therefore to consider briefly the conditions essential to the development of such a code, its possible general character and content, and a few specific canons that might be included in the code.

CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOPMENT OF CODE

In considering the conditions essential to the development of a code of ethics for public servants, one is struck immediately with the way in which the

public service differs fundamentally in make-up from those groups of workers that already have formal rules of conduct. It is not composed as are the latter of persons belonging to a single vocation, but comprises within itself practically all vocations. Its members are not versed in a common technique as are those of the professional organizations to which codes of ethics are still largely confined. No common educational background is required for the public service as it is for the practice of law or medicine, or for engaging in architectural or engineering work. Public servants do not even have the common tie of being all hand workers or all brain workers. They are, in short, a heterogeneous aggregation, whereas those groups that have ethical codes are homogeneous in character.

This fundamental difference is pointed out, not because it is believed to interpose an insuperable barrier to the development of a code of ethics for the public service, but because it doubtless will make the development of such a code more difficult than would be the case if the public service were more like professional organizations.

There are, however, certain prerequisites to the development of a public service code of ethics. In the first place, entrance to, and promotion in, the service must be based upon definite qualifications for the work to be performed. So long as partisan or other irrelevant considerations continue to be important factors in determining the personnel of the public service, it is hardly conceivable that a code of ethics will be brought into being. This does not mean that all progress toward the desired goal must wait until the merit system has been established in every nook and corner of governmental jurisdiction, but it does mean that no branch of the public service in which the merit system has not become firmly

rooted is likely to make any contribution to the cause of higher standards of conduct. It is perfectly possible that in our federal civil service and in the civil service of some of our larger cities where the spoils system has been most successfully curbed, we shall see attempts at formulating codes of ethics long before other branches of the public service have even been brought under legal civil service provisions. In every movement we have had our pioneers, and so we probably shall have in this.

In the second place, the workers must be organized. A loose aggregation of individuals without any machinery for group action is in no position to give formal expression to its common sentiments and ideals. All of the vocational groups that have reached the code-framing stage, or have formally adopted codes of ethics, have done so only after they had become organized in local and in larger units. To this process of evolution the public service can be no exception. Here again, however, it is not necessary to assume that the second stage of development will not begin until the first has been carried to completion. Even though our public service is as yet far from being fully organized and may never reach the one hundred per cent goal, still a code of ethics for public servants may not be altogether a remote possibility. An organization such as the National Federation of Federal Employees may well take the lead in proposing standards of conduct that ultimately will come to be accepted by government workers throughout the country.

In addition to these two prerequisites, there are several conditions that are important, though not indispensable, to the development of a code of ethics for public servants. One of these is a reasonable degree of freedom from economic want. So long as pub-

lic servants are grossly underpaid, they are likely to bend most of their organized efforts toward improving their standards of compensation and to give relatively little thought to their moral obligations to the community. In the past, our civil service unions have devoted themselves largely to the promotion of legislation designed to better their working conditions and to increase their inadequate pay. They have, it is true, always stood staunchly by the merit system. But with the exception of their occasional consideration of the question as to whether government employes should avail themselves of the strike as a weapon in enforcing their demands, these organizations appear to have concerned themselves but little with matters of public service ethics. The reason for this doubtless lies in the greater urgency of the bread and butter problem.

Another condition of considerable importance is the coöperation of our educational institutions in raising standards of performance and conduct in the public service. Our high schools and our colleges and universities are the great "ideal factories" of the country and have done much to elevate the moral tone of the business and professional world. This has been accomplished largely by means of special courses of training for the more important vocations. It is true that the public service is not a distinctive vocation such as law, medicine, engineering and agriculture; but is rather a field of employment, analogous to that of business and industry, in which all the vocations are represented. Nevertheless, the tasks and the viewpoint required in the public service are sufficiently different from those of private industry to warrant our institutions of learning in giving greater prominence than they now do to the peculiar needs in the former field. What is necessary is not

so much the addition of new departments of instruction, as the introduction of new courses of study emphasizing those features which are of especial importance to workers in government employ. These courses could be utilized, not only in preparing young men and women more specifically for the tasks of the public service, but also for inculcating in them those standards and ideals of conduct by which all public servants should be guided.

It is probably fair to say that all the foregoing conditions essential to or helpful in developing a code of ethics for the public service, are within the realm of possibility. The merit system is slowly but surely establishing appropriate standards of qualifications for entering the service and securing promotion in it. The process of organization, too, is well under way, especially among the employes of the federal government and of our larger cities. No doubt the pressure of economic want will be gradually alleviated, largely through the efforts of the organized civil servants themselves in directing public attention to their present inadequate compensation. With the growing importance of government activity in the life of the nation, it is to be expected also that our educational institutions will coöperate to an increasing extent in improving the equipment and in stimulating the moral sense of the men and women in government employ.

GENERAL CHARACTER AND CONTENTS

We may now make a few brief observations with regard to the general character and contents of a public service code. It is in order to preface these observations by raising the question as to whether the ethical standards of public servants will ever be expressed in a single formal document, or whether the various groups of govern-

ment employes are not more apt to adopt separate codes of their own. Probably the latter is more likely to be the case than the former. That there would be any appreciable difference in the practical result is not at all certain. Our present concern, however, is not so much to anticipate the actual trend of evolution as it is to clarify our thinking with regard to the standards of conduct that should be observed in common by all members of the public service. For this task it is a convenience to proceed on the basis of a single code for all, even though events may follow a different line of development.

Let us assume, then, a single code. In the first place, such a code would supplement, but would not include, those canons of ethics which are already in the codes of the various professional organizations represented in the public service and which relate to matters peculiar to those professions. It could not attempt to embody all the rules which may be found necessary or desirable in each and every one of the numerous vocational groups that make up the public service. The public service code would have to confine itself to those more general canons of ethics that apply equally to all the groups. By so doing it might appropriate a considerable number of rules that are in existing professional codes, but to this there could be no objection so long as those rules were of general applicability.

In the second place, a public service code would probably follow the example of other similar codes in laying down rules to govern the relationships between fellow workers. This seems both desirable and important. In professional organizations, canons of this character have been adopted, in part at least, to protect individual members from unfair competition. Perhaps there is less need in the public service

for this type of protection, but there is great need for harmony and coöperation. Friction and lack of teamwork among government workers not only make for unpleasant conditions within the service but also lower the efficiency and tend to defeat the purposes of government. It is therefore quite as essential to have definite standards of conduct to govern the relationships between fellow workers in the public service as it is in professional organizations, though for somewhat different reasons.

Finally, such a code ought to state clearly the obligations that every government worker owes to the public. It is the great distinction of all governmental activity as contrasted with private industry that the motive in the former is service to the community, whereas the motive in the latter usually is profit to the individual owners. Public servants, therefore, have the high privilege of contributing directly to the welfare of their fellow men instead of merely as an incident to making profits for the private owners of industry. With this privilege goes also a greater responsibility than rests upon less favored workers, to place the interests of the community above all other interests. In order that public servants may be constantly reminded of this fact and may govern their conduct accordingly, it is important that their obligations to the public be set forth in their code of ethics.

A FEW PROPOSED CANONS FOR A PUBLIC SERVICE CODE

This brings us to the consideration of specific canons for a public service code. It would be as futile as it would be presumptuous to undertake a complete enumeration of the many items that such a code ought to contain, and it is not our purpose to do so. At most, we shall endeavor to set down a few of

the more obvious essentials of the ethics of public service, in the hope that they may afford a starting point for a more comprehensive effort. With this thought in mind, the following canons are suggested for the guidance of the public servant:

1. *He should at all times be courteous, especially in his dealings with citizens who come to him with complaints or for information, assistance or advice.*

At first thought this suggested canon may seem superfluous, for it would appear that courtesy might be taken for granted. Unfortunately, however, it is not always present in public offices.

2. *He should give the best that is in him to the work he is called upon to perform.*

In reference to this canon, the writer wishes to disclaim any share in the popular view, still too largely held, that all public employes are loafers. Some of the most conscientious workers that may be found anywhere are in governmental services, and the average civil servant is probably no less industrious than the average employe of any of our large private corporations. Nevertheless, there are some public place holders, especially in branches of the service not yet touched by the merit system, who are greatly in need of the admonition given above.

3. *He should deal fairly with all citizens, and should not accord to some more favorable treatment than to others.*

A public servant should never forget that he is the servant of all of the public, not of any fractional part of it. He should therefore treat all citizens alike, regardless of their political affiliation, religious faith, racial extraction, or material wealth.

4. *He should not limit his independence of action by accepting gratuities or favors from private citizens who have business dealings with the government.*

Comment on this is hardly necessary. There are, unfortunately, many indi-

viduals who have no scruples about the methods they employ in winning concessions from governmental agencies, and all too often, through the frailties of human nature, public servants fall victims to the subtle snares of these self-seeking members of the community.

5. *He should never be a party to any transaction which would require him, as a representative of a department of government, to pass upon the quality or price of goods or services which he, in some other capacity, is offering for sale to that department.*

The impropriety of acting as buyer and vendor in the same transaction is obvious.

6. *If a public servant is asked by his superior to do something which would jeopardize the vital interests of the public, he should first endeavor to dissuade his superior from pressing the request, and if this method proves unsuccessful he should tender his resignation, stating publicly his reason for doing so.*

Many a public servant has had this problem to face. The solution suggested above is drastic, but there appears to be no other proper way out. To make the problem even more difficult, it usually happens that the issue is beclouded by other considerations also affecting the public welfare. For example, a faithful public servant may have continuous pressure brought to bear upon him to relax somewhat the enforcement of a law which interferes with the interests of the political faction with which his superior is affiliated. If this public servant resigns, he may simply clear the way for the appointment of another person who would make no effort at all to enforce the law in question and thus leave the public welfare less protected than ever. Might it not be better, in a case of this

kind, to make some concessions to the wishes of the superior and to stay by the ship lest even greater injury be done? At times, yes; at other times, no. Each case must be decided on its own merits. However, unless the issue is beclouded in the manner just indicated, no public servant ought to shrink from the drastic course proposed in the foregoing canon.

7. *A public servant who is charged with the enforcement of a law with which he is not in sympathy should either subordinate his personal views or resign from the service.*

That a law may be poorly adapted to the needs of the community, or may even be positively injurious to society, is quite conceivable. A public servant, however, ought not to make himself the judge of its efficacy.

8. *He should work in full coöperation with other public servants in furthering the ends of government and in promoting public welfare.*

A public servant cannot be a law unto himself in the manner in which he does his work. If he is not animated with the spirit of coöperation he will frequently retard rather than advance the cause of social welfare.

9. *He should be true to his obligations as a custodian of public property and regard its misuse or waste as as serious an offense as the direct misuse or waste of money from the public treasury.*

Public servants should be just as conscientious in the use and care of the property belonging to the people as they would be were this property their own. They should bear in mind, moreover, that the waste of public resources results in a weakening of the services that governments are established to render to the men, women and children of the community.